



Department of Justice

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TEXAS WOMAN SENTENCED FOR DRUG AND MONEY LAUNDERING CRIMES

MOBILE, Ala. - Aracely Lopez, 46, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge, Callie V. S. Granade, for her participation in an interstate cocaine distribution and money laundering scheme. Lopez, a resident of Rio Grande City, Texas, was convicted by a jury following a week-long trial in January, of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, conspiracy to launder the drug proceeds, and 19 specific transactions of money laundering.

The trial evidence showed that Lopez, and her co-defendant Ramon Garza, both living in south Texas, supplied more than 300 kilograms to Alvin and Benjamin Knox in Mobile for distribution here and in the Thomasville, Alabama, area. Some of the cocaine was also distributed in Montgomery and Birmingham through drug contacts arranged by the Knoxes. In turn, the proceeds were delivered to Texas, where the drug money was laundered through various front businesses.

Judge Granade chided Lopez for involving two of her daughters in her criminal activities, and sentenced her to 20 years incarceration. The judge told Lopez that she intended to distinguish between Lopez and her co-defendant Ramon Garza, whom she identified as more culpable, in pronouncing their sentences. Judge Granade ordered that the sentences on all the counts run concurrently, and that Lopez be delivered to the appropriate immigration officials upon the completion of her sentence for deportation consideration. The judge imposed a supervised release term of five years, and ordered that the defendant pay \$2,000 in special assessments as well as a forfeiture judgement of \$6,000,000.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Criminal Investigations Division of the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Alabama Bureau of Investigations, Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Mobile Police Department.